

And whatever you
do, that I will do, that
you be glorified in the
Father.
If you ask anything
of me, I will do it.
If you love Me,
keep My commandments.
And I will pray
the Father, and He will give you
another Comforter, who may
abide with you forever—
the Spirit of truth.

JESUS ON... DISCIPLESHIP

RMPP EVENT 37

SCHEDULE

Welcome and Zoom Etiquette

Opening Prayer

Speaker Introduction

Message: *Jesus On...Discipleship*

Q&A and Discussion

Breakout Rooms

Closing Prayer

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JESUS ON... DISCIPLESHIP

SYNOPSIS

Many people have a lot to say about discipleship, and with so many opinions out there to listen to, who has the “right” answer? While many may have good perspectives, Jesus has the correct answer. So what does He say about being His disciple and, in turn, discipling others?

| **Audio Link:** bit.ly/425qt22

| **Scripture Reflection**

“If you want to be My disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else...even your own life...And if you do not carry your own cross and follow Me, you cannot be My disciple.” - *Luke 14:26-27 (NLT)*

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...and teaching these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you...” - *Matthew 28:19-20 (NLT)*

EVENT

37

| *Personal Reflection*

1. What experiences have you had in being disciplined? How would you have liked to have been disciplined?
2. How have you been involved in discipling others? What can you share that would benefit others?

| *Personal Application*

1. How might you move forward in following Jesus and being His disciple?
2. How can God use you to disciple those men He has brought into your life?

| *Recommended Reading*

Sit, Walk, Stand: The Process of Christian Maturity: *by Watchman Nee*

Loving People: *by Dr. John Townsend*

A WORD FROM...

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

When someone says “discipleship,” what pictures come to mind?

- Jesus and the Twelve.
- A guru sitting with crossed legs on top of a mountain.
- A class or program your church conducts once a year.
- Being personally disciplined by another Christian.
- Being a disciple of Jesus. You’ve probably referred to yourself as being a Christian, but have you ever told someone you were a follower or disciple of Jesus?
- Have you considered that God might want to use you to disciple others?

All these questions relate to what a disciple is, and how this should impact your life as a Christian. We’re not so much interested in the world’s definition of discipleship, but what does Jesus tell us about being His disciple and leading other men to Him? This is the focus of this RMPP event.

First, we’ll take a look at what Jesus says about being His disciple:

- Does discipleship involve more than being a Christian?
- What are the requirements of being a disciple?
- How closely are you willing to follow Jesus?
- Did Jesus' life demonstrate the characteristics of being a disciple?
- Would you have liked to have been one of Jesus' first disciples?
- Is it different being Jesus' disciple today?

Second, we'll look at what Jesus says about making disciples:

- Does Jesus' command to make disciples apply to you? To what extent?
- What can you learn from the way that Jesus made disciples?
- How might you follow Jesus' methods in your own life?
- How do you determine who Jesus wants you to disciple?
- Do you think you are up to the challenge?

My prayer for you is that, as you participate in this event and wrestle with these devotionals over the next several months, that you will come away with a better understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. I pray you will be motivated to follow Jesus ever more closely in your daily life. And may you come to see the awesome privilege God is giving you to be involved in drawing other men to your Master!

God bless...

Roger Mitiska

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

DEVOTIONAL 1

The Bible is full of discipleship relationships. Whether you look in the Old Testament or at the life of Jesus, discipleship is a core tenet of the Christian faith. What does the Bible say about discipleship, and are you listening?

If you've spent any time living a Christian life, you've heard the term discipleship thrown around as something we are called to do. The funny thing is, we all have different ideas of what that looks like and how it should play out in the life of the church. Is it simply gathering for a weekly Bible study? Does it involve servanthood? Is it just for new believers where we give them intro lessons into Christianity or is there something more to it? We in the church have created many forms of discipleship programs that were made to help people become disciples. We enter into the latest Christian fad for discipleship thinking we've finally found the answer for discipleship. Inevitably, we see similar results we've seen before and not the radical change in a Christian's life that we were hoping for. Maybe there's something wrong in our approach.

A while ago, I was watching a documentary on YouTube about the church in Iran called “Sheep Among Wolves” (which I highly recommend). The point that struck me in the documentary is that the church in Iran, from the initial witness to an unbeliever, calls them to witness. No “Four Spiritual Laws”, no “Sinner’s Prayer” and no definite acknowledgement that Jesus is Lord. Simply, “I’ve told you about Jesus, now tell someone else.” This seems a totally different way of thinking about Christianity than we think about in the West. Before we jump in to question this approach, we need to recognize the fact that the church in Iran is currently the fastest growing church. So maybe they have a point. Perhaps we should rethink what we are doing. After all, we have seen how well western models of discipleship have “worked.”

What does the Bible model for us in terms of discipleship? Of course, the term “discipleship” comes up in the New Testament, but there are a few scattered places in the Old Testament where a form of discipleship takes place. There is a pattern for discipleship present in the Old Testament by way of covenant relationship – God calls Israel to be his people and walk according to his ways (Deuteronomy 4:1-14; 1 Sam 12:14). Furthermore, there are examples of discipleship such as Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 2:1-13), disciples of Isaiah (Isaiah 8:16), Baruch, the disciple of Jeremiah (Jeremiah

36), and the disciples of Samuel (1 Samuel 19).

Discipleship is something that is meant to be an ongoing life journey of walking together, ministering together and learning along the way. It is a way of teaching that is demonstrated as much as it is taught. In my church, we do it through various serving teams. After a short four-week session about the church and some basics of Christianity, people are encouraged to jump on a team (i.e., hospitality) and to learn about the walk of faith in the midst of serving. Discipleship happens in the midst of life, rather than separate from it. This seems to be the model that Jesus put forth.

Jesus at one point sends out the twelve, right in the middle of their discipleship time, to minister to the people in Israel and calls them to “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons (Matthew 10:8).” The disciples are in the midst of discipleship and are told to do miraculous things. Jesus simply assumes they are ready to take on the ministry. The interesting thing is this is not after three years of extensive seminary. Jesus had just called Matthew in chapter 9, and verse 1 is the first time the twelve are listed by name, indicating that they were recently called.

Perhaps we need to revisit the topic of discipleship and learn

from Jesus and the Christians in Iran that ministry is something that is taught on the way, rather than learned first and done after.

Robert is currently waiting on God for what He wants him to do for work. He lives in Toronto, actively participates in his church, and enjoys growing in Jesus. He currently writes a blog which he invites you to read at www.walkingwithjesus.co.

| **Discussion Questions**

1. In what ways have you been disciplined? How has it helped your Christian walk?
2. How do you feel about the idea of discipleship starting from the initial witness to the unbeliever? Do you think this will help or could it cause problems? Have we perhaps not done discipleship properly?
3. What do you think Jesus' model of discipleship was? How can you change your way of doing discipleship to be closer to what Jesus did?

| **Read**

Matthew 5:14-16

| **Reflect on This**

“Discipleship isn’t a program or an event; it’s a way of life. It’s not for a limited time, but for our whole life. Discipleship isn’t for beginners alone; it’s for all believers for every day of their life. Discipleship isn’t just one of the things the church does; it is what the church does.” - *Bill Hull*

WE ALL NEED IT!

DEVOTIONAL 2

Discipleship is foundational to the Christian walk, and with discipleship, you'll be well-prepared to handle whatever life throws at you. But without it, you may find yourself tossed to and fro amid life's storms. So, who's preparing you by discipling you?

True discipleship is a concept that I have never learned in life. As I was growing up, I was deeply loved and cared for by my dad, yet he never spent time sitting down with me and teaching me about life. Dad always got angry whenever I made a mistake, so I never found in him a person with whom I could entrust my life stories. In 2017, God saved me, yet my anger and distance with Dad remained. As a result, my relationship with God could not go past the lukewarm level. It resulted in my resistance of any form of discipleship and authority over me, for fear that it would hurt my feelings and limit my freedom in life. For the first 4 years, my relationship with God was unfulfilling and merely a religious duty. I bore little fruit for His kingdom and saw little change in my thought life.

In 2022, through an unexpected event that threw me into a deep pit of depression, God showed me how my disobedience and refusal to submit under authority had led to a deep frustration with life and God Himself. At that moment, I made a difficult decision to obey my pastor and spiritual leader to refrain from doing something I thought I could not live without, even though it was sinful. Little did I expect that my life would start to change.

My spiritual leader started to put me in a discipleship program in which he showed me gentleness, rebuked me in love and made me accountable to him about my life. I always associated rebuking with anger and hatred, therefore, I never opened my heart to even constructive feedback. As God allowed me to see the fruits of discipleship as I learned to submit under His authority, my thought life started to transform: after a whole life of looking at life with a pessimistic point of view and battling with constant bouts of depression, I now look at life through the lens of Christ and have become joyful, confident, and loving. Obeying God became much easier even when I couldn't foresee the outcome, and life started to feel good for the first time ever!

In Luke 6:40, Jesus says, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher."

When we try to walk this life on earth based on our own judgments, we are telling God that we know ourselves and understand life better than He does. If a Christian doesn't listen to God and obey Him, he cannot be called a "disciple." God then becomes an advisor or a counselor whose "advice" you can choose to follow or not. But does God want to just be your advisor? We are called followers of Christ, which means whatever He tells us to do we listen and follow.

I bet we all have friends who never rebuke us yet always compliment us and encourage us to do whatever we want or to follow our heart. There's nothing wrong with receiving compliments from someone. But a true friend loves us enough to challenge us and point out where we have done wrong and how we can overcome it. Jesus wants to be a True Friend of ours, and He wants us to listen to his gentle rebuke so that we can become more and more like him. He wants us to live a life of freedom so we can bear fruit and advance His kingdom.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the famous theologian, says, "Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ." Christ is not the author of a self-help book, nor is he a motivational speaker nor someone who simply wants to please you. Hebrew 12:6 says, "For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastises every son He

receives.” Christ loves you, so He discipled you. At times, He will challenge you to obey Him in a difficult matter as you read His word or talk with Him in your quiet time. At times, He will disciple you through other people as they train you or rebuke you. At times, He will even put you through a test where He will bless you abundantly as you obey Him. In Christ, we are new creations.

I know many of us find it difficult to be discipled by Christ and His people because of the traumas we’ve experienced in life. Yet, it is important to remember that our past no longer defines us. God can break us free from our trauma and our pains and restore all of the brokenness that has taken place in our life. Our God is indeed the Great Physician who restores us not only spiritually but also mentally and physically.

Phuc is working at Pizza Hut Vietnam as a management trainee, where he leads many exciting marketing projects to drive the growth of Pizza Hut in the pizza category. Phuc came to know the Lord in 2017 when he was a student in Thailand and continues to serve Him after returning to his home country of Vietnam.

| ***Discussion Questions***

1. In which area of your life do you need to change to become a better disciple of Jesus?
2. Do you recall any event in your life that affects the way you think about discipleship? If so, what spiritual and practical steps can you take to overcome this to become more obedient to Christ and your leaders?
3. Is Christ your discipler or just an advisor? Please elaborate on your answer.

| ***Read***

Proverbs 3:12

| ***Reflect on This***

“The church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became man for no other purpose.” - *C.S. Lewis*

BEING AND DOING ARE DIFFERENT THINGS

DEVOTIONAL 3

Our Christian walk is not all about doing. Rather, we are to become more like Christ - more like the fruit of the Spirit - more of Him and less of us. You don't get there by doing; you get there by being. Who's helping you be a better disciple?

I don't know about you, but I often feel better about myself when I am doing good work - it is good to do good work. But doing good work to feel ok about ourselves misses the mark. I remember a season - a little over ten years ago now - when I had two small children and our family's ministry felt like it was developing very slowly - we were reaching out to individuals in Bangkok, Thailand who were homeless or involved in prostitution and it felt like almost no one was experiencing real transformation. I thought, "We need to try harder, sacrifice more, learn new ways of sharing the Gospel..." One evening, a visiting pastor asked me the question, "Iven, how much of this work do you think depends on you, and how much depends on God?" I had to answer honestly, "I feel like 95% depends on me - if I could just find the right ministry training and try

hard enough, then God would show up and do what I can't.” And that was when I began to realize that maybe I had become confused... maybe it didn't mostly depend on me.

Brothers, Jesus loves you. Now. Right now. Please pause for a moment and remember: while we were still his enemies, He gave His life for us (Romans 5). We have come to Him (maybe in our darkest hour) only because we were drawn to Him by the Father (John 6). He wants you - He has always wanted you, and will always want you. He desires for you to be His, to be with Him. This is the simple truth. There is nothing you can do to change His heart towards you. But it can be very easy for any one of us to miss His heart towards us. There will be some who have done mighty works for Jesus, but not with Him. Jesus himself says, “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’, will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On Judgement Day... I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’” (Mt 7:21, 22a, 23) How do we know the will of our Father in Heaven? How do we allow ourselves to be known by Jesus? I'd like to share one idea that has really helped me (thanks to Dallas Willard): we need to stop “trying” and start “training.”

When we “try” to do something, we look at what someone else is doing and give it our best effort. We try to be successful by

copying the external things we see someone doing - if it goes well we think we are good at it and maybe keep going. If it goes poorly, we tend to quit or give up. If we haven't "trained" then usually it is impossible to be consistently successful. Training is different from trying - when we train for something we usually seek out a coach or a guide who will lead us in a process of exercises that changes us from the inside out. It grows our capacity for the good, while catching and correcting our bad habits and broken ways of doing things.

So, how do we "train" ourselves? First, we might pray and ask Jesus to bring someone to mind whom we have observed to be better at this than we are. Afterwards, we could pray for the courage to approach that person and ask them to help "train" us to get better at "being" with God - someone who will spend time asking us questions and listening to us share about how our journey of being with God and being known by God is going. What is working? What isn't? Then, with help, we train ourselves to grow like Jesus: we read scripture, we practice talking with God about everything (not just asking Him for help and thanking Him, but simply telling him about ourselves and being known!), we rest (sabbath is made for us). Jesus had a habit of breaking away from the needs of the people around Him, of disappointing His friends and followers and family, in order to go and spend personal time with the Father. Even from His baptism before any known ministry, we see Jesus hearing

the voice of His Father (who is also our Father) announcing, “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased!” (Matthew 3:17)

The Lord desires for each of us to hear that voice each and every day. To be a disciple is to be beloved. Will we pause long enough to listen? Let’s practice and let’s train. How easy is it for you to imagine yourself hearing, “You, (insert your name here) are my beloved son, in you I am well pleased?” What obstacles stand in your way? What does Jesus say about those obstacles? Who is the person that you think could help you grow in “being” or “abiding” (in the language of John 15)? When will you approach him/her and ask for help? How is your connection to Jesus right now? Honestly rate it on a scale of 1-10 and share that number with your connect group or a trusted friend. Could you take a moment every day for the next 30 days to ask yourself, “What number is my connection to Jesus right now, and what can I do today to increase that connection?” What impact might that practice have on your personal belovedness/discipleship?

Iven is learning to receive the friendship of Jesus unconditionally. He has a lot of help from his wife, six children, and friends near and far. Iven and his family were in Bangkok, Thailand, for many years but now live in the Pacific Northwest of the USA.

| **Discussion Questions**

1. What foundation are you building your life on?
2. If your foundation is the word of God, is there anything that is seeping in that may be causing a crack in your foundation? Could this be shaping you in a way that is contrary to God's design for your life?
3. Where is your identity found? Is it in your job? In your relationships? In something other than Christ?

| **Read**

John 15:5-6

| **Reflect on This**

"I'll never be more loved than I am right now
Wasn't holding You up
So there's nothing I can do to let You down
It doesn't take a trophy to make You proud
I'll never be more loved than I am right now" - *Maverick City
Music & Elevation Worship*

THE KEY TO EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

DEVOTIONAL 4

What is the key to effective discipleship? Is it a book, a curriculum, or attending a seminar? The answer is a response rather than a resource. Effective discipleship is rooted in a heart of humility that is teachable. Are you?

I struggle with discipleship. That’s one of the first things that came to mind as I was thinking about what I wanted to share with you all. The act of humbling myself to accept advice, instruction, or direction strikes directly at the heart of my independence. Usually, as I “listen” to whoever is pouring into my life—wife, friend, family member, pastor— a defensive wall slowly rises in my heart, built brick-by-brick from feelings I’m not even necessarily conscious of. But when I unpack these feelings, I unravel similar threads each time: I don’t need to hear this. I can figure this out on my own. They don’t really understand things the way that I do. Why am I wasting my time listening to other people when I’ve got a better grasp on the situation than they do?

It's arrogance on my part, plain and simple. I often don't like advice from people, especially when it's over a topic I think I have a good understanding about or (and this is a big one) I don't want to have input about. Maybe if I drill down deeper, I will discover it's pride. Maybe it's a heart of superiority. Or maybe it's just stubbornness, an unwillingness to submit to the authority of anyone but myself. That last one rings true for me. Deep down, I only want to hear from one person when it comes to the final say in things: me.

Maybe you've read this far and you're thinking, "that's a problem for a Christian." After all, the entire point of being a Christ-follower is to subject one's self—one's whole life—to Christ and therefore to God (James 4:6-7, Job 22:21-22, 1 Peter 5:6, Romans 7:4). In our lives, it's not possible to serve two masters at the same time. Either submit to God as the final authority and experience life through death or submit to yourself and experience death through life. This feels paradoxical, and on one level it is. Submitting to any authority other than yourself requires a death to control, selfishness, and our own will. But it brings an abundant and eternal life that compares to nothing in heaven or on earth (John 3:16, Luke 9:23-24). Submitting to yourself without that death, on the other hand, leads to the opposite (Romans 6:16-17). Both Scripture and life experiences demonstrate the truth of this

counterintuitive idea. Even Jesus himself showed the ultimate example of submitting to God (Luke 22:42, Matthew 26:39).

So, what's the problem? Why is it so hard to submit to God and, therefore, to submit to discipleship that leads to growth in our faith (Proverbs 27:17)? In a word, the answer is: pride. If you take the time to read through some of these passages, you'll notice how often humility goes hand-in-hand with this submission—humble yourself before God and accept instruction. Many other passages in the Bible demand humility as well (Micah 6:8, Luke 14:11, 2 Chronicles 7:14). It's no secret that God prizes humility in his people, and it's no wonder. Without humility, submission is impossible. Without humility, accepting instruction and direction is impossible. Without humility, discipleship is impossible.

Understanding that humility is the key to accepting discipleship doesn't necessarily make everything easier. In my own life, I've discovered that pride can be chipped away over time, but there's also a component of fear involved: a worry that I'll be pushed in a direction I don't want to go or that I'll be given the wrong kind of instruction and act on it. And while it's wise to be discerning about who disciples you and how you respond to it, this kind of fear must be weighed against the consequences of solely relying on your own vision. How often am I blind to what's really going on in a situation and needing

an outside perspective to correct or add to my thinking? It's hard for me to imagine what my life would look like if I only ever considered my own thoughts and feelings before making significant decisions.

Finally, consider God's intended design for humanity. We weren't meant to live alone, hobbling through a life comprised of only our own thoughts, feelings, and opinions because we're too prideful or fearful to accept discipleship. We were meant to thrive in an interconnected community filled with diverse ideas, perspectives, and wisdom and submitted to God's authority. God is infinite; humans are finite. But through our shared connections with our brothers and sisters—through shared discipleship in Christ—we taste the smallest drop of God's incomprehensible nature and drink in the delights and wisdom of communal understanding.

Ben lives with his wife and son in Bangkok, Thailand. He chooses discipleship by spending time with accountability partners, studying Scripture and prayer (though not as much as he should!), and listening to his wife, family, and friends.

| **Discussion Questions**

1. Are you willing and working to submit your life to Christ's lordship daily?
2. Are you willing to accept discipleship from trusted people in your life?
3. Are you willing to fight against the selfish pride and fear that prevents you from allowing others to speak into your life?

| **Read**

1 Peter 5:5-6

| **Reflect on This**

“Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.” - *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

ONE SIZE FITS ALL?

DEVOTIONAL 5

Is there a one-size fits all approach to discipling others? Or are there different ways to go about it? What can we learn from others, past and present, that helps us see that discipleship is not a cookie-cutter curriculum but a relationship-driven approach rooted in love for God and love for people?

After we moved to Thailand a few years ago, my family and I soon experienced one of the fantastic night markets for the first time. While roaming through the aisles and enjoying some of the delicious food we soon found ourselves in front of some booths with various types of apparel. And then, we saw a collection of button-down shirts in vibrant colors that caught our eye. After inspecting them we saw they were marked “Free-size” or “One-size-fits-all.” I am not a small man, I’m around 185 cm tall and bigger around than I ought to be. These shirts may be described as big enough for most, but they were not actually big enough for all. This fact is true for almost everything and there is only thing I know for certain that is one size fits all: it’s the salvation that Jesus provides to any

who will come to God through Him. Paul summarizes it this way in his letter to Titus, “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people” (Titus 2:11). While, salvation is applicable for everyone and anyone in the same way, I believe discipleship is a mixture of constants and variables.

What is that?: I once heard a comedian who was talking about his time as a waiter in a Mexican restaurant. During his time there, people would ask him about what certain items on the menu were: “What is a taco? What are nachos? What is a burrito? etc.” To each of the questions his reply was, “Well that is a tortilla with meat, cheese, and vegetables.” You see there are some items that are consistently in different Mexican dishes which are actually key ingredients in almost all my favorites (meat, cheese, tortilla). But there are many different ways of putting these ingredients together, allowing for many different dishes and flavors to result.

Constants: Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, “Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ.”

Some of the constants within discipleship involve the goal and the primary tools. The goal of discipleship is stated quite simply when Jesus answers the question of what is the greatest commandment...

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:36-40) Here we see a two-part description of the goal of a Christian’s life. First, we should be growing in our love for God with everything we have & are. Second, our love for God should overflow into our interactions with the people around us. The primary tools of discipleship are the Bible, prayer, and community.

Variables: In the same way that the main ingredients in Mexican food can be prepared in a wide variety of ways, the variables of discipleship are numerous. As a disciple of Jesus, it is imperative that I spend time getting to know God through the Bible. However, that can be done by reading, by studying, by listening to an audio Bible, by writing out sections of the Bible, when we listen to quality sermons, and many other ways. Likewise, we should be spending time in prayer sharing our hearts with our Lord and listening for His leading, but the ways we spend time in prayer are varies. We may pray with our heads bowed and our eyes closed, we may pray aloud, pray as we walk or drive, pray by journaling out our prayers, or other ways. When it comes to community, we should be in

growing in discipleship with others. We should be involved with a local church body and engaged in growing with others toward loving God better and better. With others we should be practicing pursuing God through the Bible & pursuing God through prayer. The ways this looks are as varied as there are differences in people.

A pastor friend of mine was asked once which version of the Bible was best and his answer to that question has stuck with me ever since. He said, “the best version of the Bible is the version that you read.” In other words, the most precise version of the Bible that stays on our shelf is not as helpful as a version that we will read and seek to live out. When we think about discipleship the question is not, “Should we engage in discipleship?” Rather we should ask ourselves, “Does this help me grow toward loving God and my neighbor better?” If the answer is yes, pursue it.

Jonathan is currently teaching the Bible at an international school and is a regular speaker at his church. He served as a pastor in Western New York for a decade prior to moving to Bangkok, Thailand where he now lives with his wife and their four children.

| ***Discussion Questions***

1. What are the most helpful ways you have found to grow as a disciple of Jesus?
2. Are you pursuing God through prayer and the Bible?
3. Who are you pursuing alongside Jesus? Who should you add to this community?

| ***Read***

John 15:4-5

| ***Reflect on This***

“Discipleship never consists in this or that specific action: it is always a decision, either for or against Jesus Christ.” - *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

VERTICAL RELATIONSHIPS

DEVOTIONAL 6

Discipleship is a life-long commitment to growth, which does not and will not happen on its own. Instead, it occurs through a relationship more profound than a friendship and firmly rooted in commitment.

Are you teachable? You may think you are but...are you really? Do you allow others to point out your blind spots or do you not have any? Do you take an appropriate challenge towards greater growth as an affront or do you see it as an act of love and care? The truth is, we all need to grow, and that need doesn't become any less necessary once you are married, or have a leadership position in your church, etc. In fact, if you remain imperfect, and you will, there will always be another area of your life that God wants to work on, mold, and transform into the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ. So how do we grow? Many of us may look to podcasts, seminars, online teaching videos, or the latest best-seller. While those resources are good, that is what they are, resources. There are times when we try to apply resources to spiritual issues. Perhaps you, or someone you know, always gets excited by the latest book

that promises something along the lines of “40 Days to Purity”, or “6 Months to Freedom.” Part of the excitement can come from being attracted to the promise of a quick fix: in 40-days you will never struggle again, or in 6 months this difficult area will be gone from your life forever. However, quick fixes can potentially leave us disappointed and discouraged when the “promised” results don’t appear as quickly as we want them to, if at all. Life-changing growth comes through lifelong discipleship. And this is where I want to teach you about the difference between horizontal and vertical relationships.

We all have friends. Friends we can have fun and hang out with. Friends we can be open and honest with and with whom we can pray and walk through life. These are called horizontal friends. On the other hand, although a vertical friend shares many of the same aspects as a horizontal friend, there is a difference. A vertical friend is someone we have opened our lives to and to whom we have given the right to speak into our life (Proverbs 27:17). We allow these vertical friends to challenge us in our walk with God to a level that we previously thought was beyond our capability. They may point out areas in our life that make us uncomfortable. They may even expose areas we thought we had already dealt with, yet here we are again, confronted with the choice of taking the necessary hard steps leading to genuine growth or denying that those areas still

exist. We could claim that they are being judgmental towards us. We could even become defensive in our response to their challenge. As difficult as it may be, we must all have vertical friends in our life - a friend who commits to the person we are being transformed into in Christ and will always point us back to the life-changing power of God's Word (Hebrews 4:12). We allow our vertical friends to draw close to us and to see who we really are. And while this may be scary to reveal to just anyone, you will soon see that a vertical friend won't run away. We all need friends like that.

Why do we use the horizontal and vertical analogy? Because when we look at the cross, we can see Christ in the role of both horizontal and vertical. As our horizontal, Christ is someone we can talk with who can relate to us (Hebrews 4:15); someone whom we know will always be there for us (Psalm 145:18-19). Christ is our friend. As our vertical friend, Jesus can show us areas of our life that need to be aligned with the new creation that we are in Him (2 Corinthians 5:17). Holiness and righteousness are not characteristics that come naturally to us as fallen individuals with unredeemed hearts. If we want to live holy and godly lives, we must take inventory of what we allow to fill our minds and hearts as well as who we surround ourselves with (1 Peter 1:13-16). That is why we need to ground ourselves in God's Word so that we can stand firm in

the face of temptation and unholy compromise (Psalm 119:9). As believers, not only should we want our daily decisions to show growth in the area of purity, but we should also want our lives to reflect overall Christlikeness (2 Corinthians 3:18). This goal is not a one-day trip but a lifelong journey. And the journey is not a solo expedition, but rather an opportunity for you to invite other friends. Friends whom God can use to come alongside you and allow them to speak truth, show grace, give encouragement and rejoice with you as you grow in sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

While many of us may enjoy horizontal relationships, vertical relationships are about reaching out and asking for help on this journey we are called to (Hebrews 12:1-2). Furthermore, we may be tempted to choose a vertical friend based on their availability and whether their schedule is compatible with ours. Remember that there is a better way to choose a vertical friend than whether the logistics line up. Choosing a vertical friend should be prayed about and selected with similar care and consideration as a life partner or other influential relationship. When you are seeking out a vertical friend, you are asking someone to help you grow in different areas of your character and spiritual being. This is an important decision and should be treated as such. Today, who can you invite into your life as a vertical friend and discipler?

Christian is the founder and director of The MST Project, a ministry that seeks to mentor men into a pursuit of sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity. Christian has lived in Thailand for over 22 years and resides in Bangkok with his wife.

| **Discussion Questions**

1. Do you have any vertical relationships in your life right now? If not, why?
2. Why do men, or even yourself, find it challenging to be disciplined?
3. What areas of your life might God want to mold more into the likeness and character of His Son?

| **Read**

Proverbs 27:17

| **Reflect on This**

“Our closest friends must be those who are pursuing holiness because they will have an enormous effect on our lives.

You tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you exactly who you are or who you are about to become. Run with the righteous.” - *Steven Lawson*

LOOKING BACK...

DEVOTIONALS 1-6

During this connect group cycle, we pray that you have been challenged, encouraged, and inspired as you pursue greater sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity in your life. We want to encourage you to now take some time to reflect on the last six devotionals and see how you can consistently apply the many truths that have been shared and that you have learned in your life.

Devotional 1

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life? Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 2

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 3

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 4

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

Devotional 5

What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

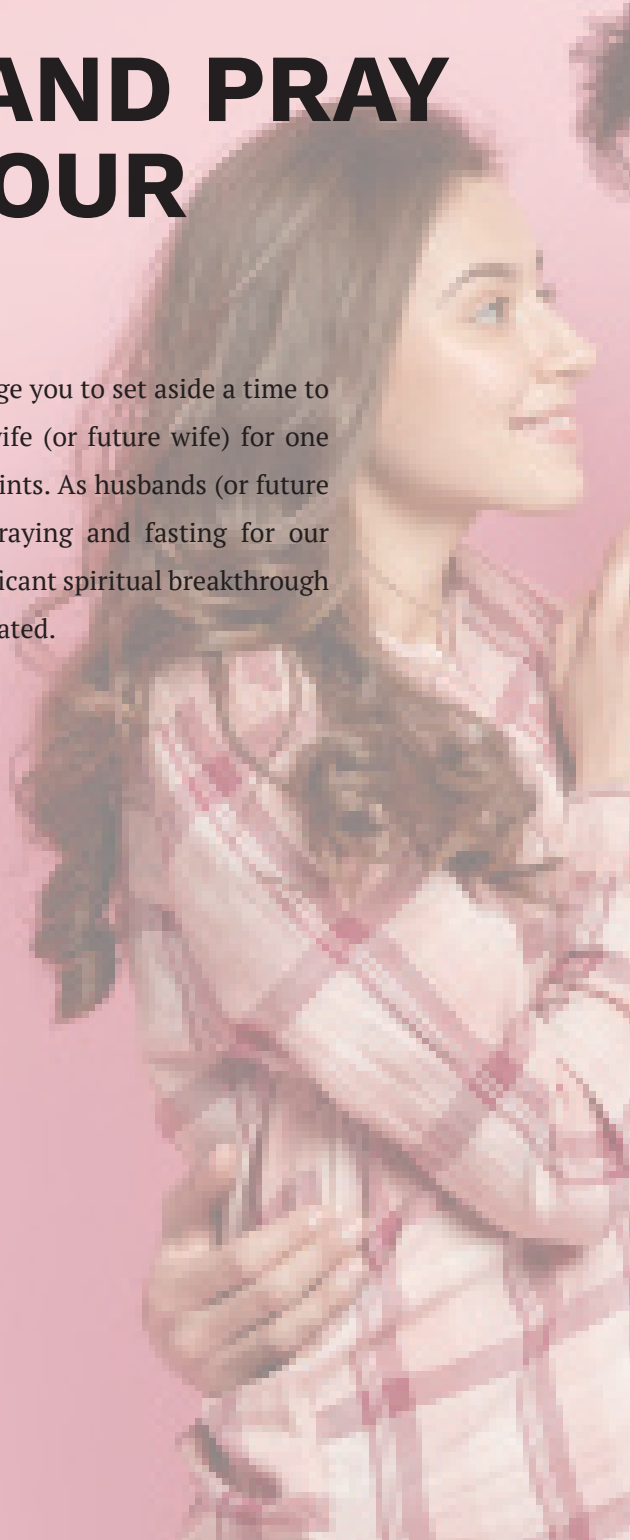
Devotional 6

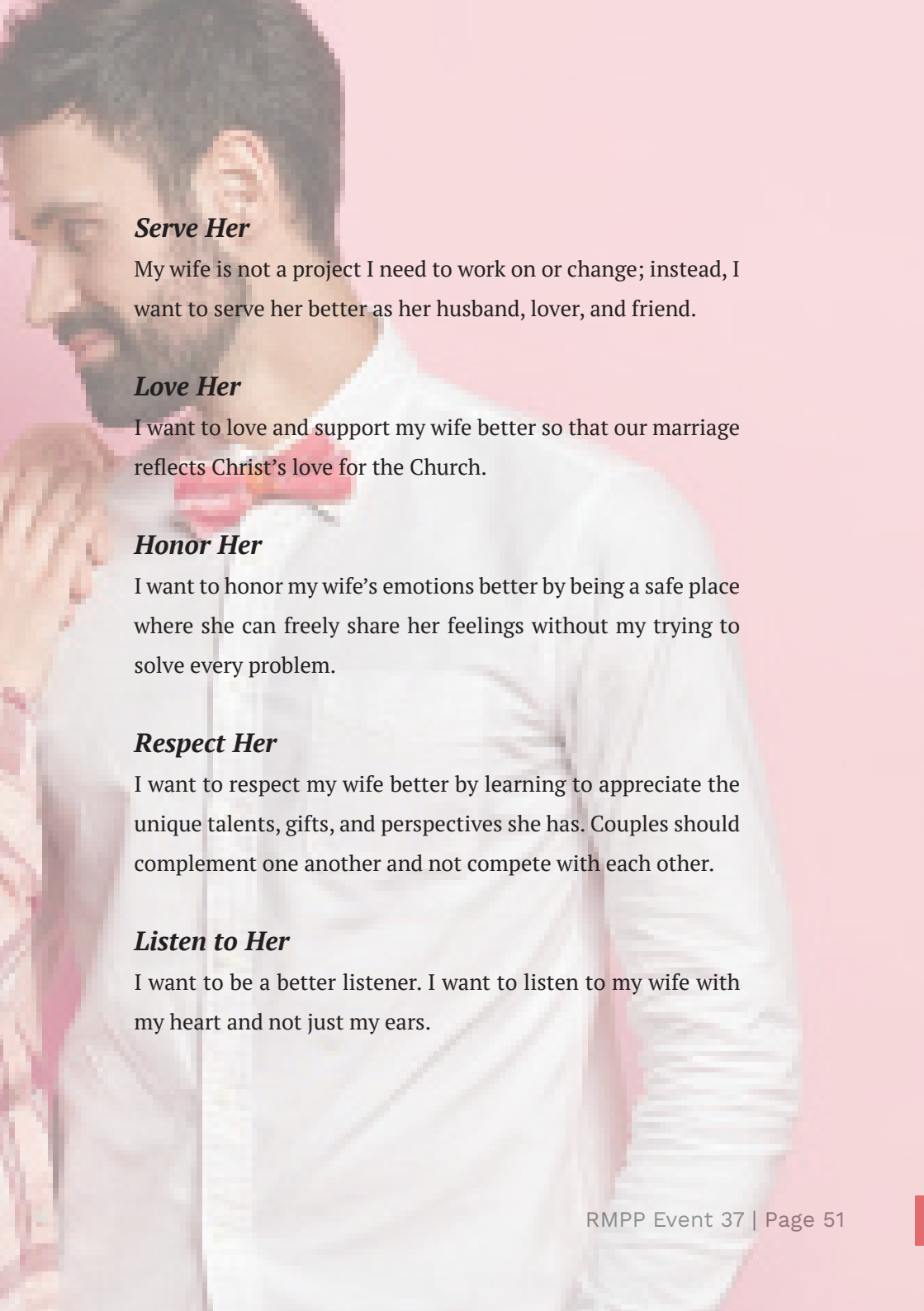
What are 1-2 truths from this devotional that you would like to reflect on from time to time? What is one aspect from this devotional that you will commit to applying in your life?

Invite one other person to hold you accountable in this area.

FAST AND PRAY FOR YOUR WIFE

Each month, we encourage you to set aside a time to fast and pray for your wife (or future wife) for one or all of the following points. As husbands (or future husbands) commit to praying and fasting for our wives, we will see a significant spiritual breakthrough and a spiritual legacy created.



A man with a beard, wearing a white dress shirt and a red bow tie, is shown in profile, looking down and to the left. The background is a soft, light pink color.

Serve Her

My wife is not a project I need to work on or change; instead, I want to serve her better as her husband, lover, and friend.

Love Her

I want to love and support my wife better so that our marriage reflects Christ's love for the Church.

Honor Her

I want to honor my wife's emotions better by being a safe place where she can freely share her feelings without my trying to solve every problem.

Respect Her

I want to respect my wife better by learning to appreciate the unique talents, gifts, and perspectives she has. Couples should complement one another and not compete with each other.

Listen to Her

I want to be a better listener. I want to listen to my wife with my heart and not just my ears.

INTRODUCING RMPP

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

| *What Is RMPP?*

Real Men Pursuing Purity (RMPP) is a community of men who are committed to growing in integrity, purity and wholeness through relevant teachings, accountability, mentoring and honest dialogue. You might not be sure that you really need to be part of a community like this because you don't struggle with compulsive addictions or sexual sin. While it is very important for many men to focus primarily on resisting sexual temptation and sin, we want to inspire and challenge you to pursue more. Although growing in purity is a big part of the vision for RMPP, it's much more than that. It's also learning about deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment with like-minded brothers. We believe that when we invite Him into these areas, He will extend His healing hand and bring about wholeness. Max Lucado says this very well.

EST. 2014

“Our Savior kneels down and gazes upon the darkest acts of our lives. But rather than recoil in horror, he reaches out in kindness and says, “I can clean that if you want.”

We are men who are not willing to settle for a life of spiritual mediocrity. We choose to relentlessly pursue greater depths of purity and wholeness for ourselves and for our families. Welcome to the RMPP community.

| How does RMPP support the local church?

RMPP does not intend to replace or represent a church; it only creates a safe place for men who want to stay active in their own church community. When a man joins the RMPP community he joins other like-minded men who desire to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. He is choosing to walk out in greater honesty and vulnerability. He is choosing to pursue purity in all aspects of his life. Aspects such as deep-rooted insecurities, developing proper work

boundaries, embracing our identity in Christ, confronting fears and anxiety, expressing ourselves emotionally in a healthy way, and pursuing holiness in a safe environment.

We then pray that as these men grow in greater maturity that they would influence their families. That they would impact their communities and their work places, and that they would be an example for other men in their home church. We believe that as men take hold of the awesome and holy call to live lives that reflect Christ, that the church will be inspired and the world will take notice.

| *What happens next?*

If you have ever attended a men's retreat, you probably remember being deeply impacted by worship, challenged by teaching, and being in community with many men who shared your excitement and enthusiasm for growth and change. A few weeks or months down the road, the gathering became a distant memory as you settled back into the routines of daily life. We don't want to create just another mountain top experience. We are committed to creating a long-term mentoring relationship for everyone who attends an event. That is why you are holding this devotional book in your hands. As you flip through these pages you will see that there devotionals with corresponding

questions. Each devotional is meant to solidify the teaching of the event by encouraging and challenging you, as well as helping to stimulate discussion through thought provoking questions, verses and quotes.

| ***Who writes the devotionals?***

Christian men from around the world have written these devotionals and have overcome real issues in their life through God's grace, goodness, mercy and love. We hope and pray that their testimonies and stories inspire, challenge and point you to Christ.

| ***What are RMPP connect groups?***

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue both purity and wholeness within an environment of peer support and encouragement. The journey to greater purity and wholeness is a journey that involves inviting other men to walk alongside of you. It is a place where you can share your prayer requests, victories, and struggles and where you can be heard, prayed for and challenged to grow in all areas of life. A connect group is designed to be a support system for you for as long as you want.

During your time in a connect group you will be:

Challenged: You will be challenged to grow in your love for Biblical truth. The men in your group will challenge you to grow in your knowledge and application of God's Word thereby enabling you to stand firm in the midst of life's trials.

Encouraged: You will be encouraged to persevere when life, work, and numerous responsibilities may seem overwhelming. The men in your group will support you through prayer, encouragement and a listening ear.

Inspired: You will be inspired to pursue greater spiritual growth and Christ-likeness. While pursuing Christ-likeness may not always be easy, it will also be worth it. The men in your group will be there to inspire you on that journey.

Accountable: The men in your group, as well as your group leader, will support you and hold you accountable as you pursue greater freedom and victory. Be assured that whatever you share in your group will be strictly confidential.

| ***When are the events held?***

RMPP events are held online 4x a year in February, May, August, and November.

| ***Who can attend?***

RMPP events are open to all men worldwide.

| ***What about privacy?***

Because of the sensitive nature of RMPP events, video or audio recording by participants is not allowed. Also, details of personal testimonies are not to be published via email, social media, or in any other form. Thank you for contributing to a safe and secure environment that helps build honesty and vulnerability.

| ***Who started RMPP?***

Real Men Pursuing Purity was founded in 2014. RMPP is a joint initiative of The MST Project and New Counseling Service.

MEET THE TEAM

THE MST GLOBAL BOARD

Christian Lenty is the founder and director of The MST Project, a ministry that seeks to mentor men into a pursuit of sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity. Christian has lived in Thailand for over 21 years and resides in Bangkok with his wife.

Rex DeKoning is the 60-year old husband and father of a large family. A former nurse and pastor, he now works in Thailand with New Counseling Service as a counselor. Rex has experienced great healing of addictive behaviors after he confessed everything and began to live an accountable life. Rex is highly motivated to inspire other men to seek out a mentor, as it has helped him to walk freely, build honesty and vulnerability.

Nick Chilver is married and is part of a blended family containing 6 children. He is grateful for the people God has brought into his life and across his path. And as he continues to learn to better reflect Him, it is his prayer that God will grant

him the privilege of helping others on the path to freedom and into the Light. He resides in Thailand with his wife.

Roger Mitiska and his wife are retired and living in Thailand. They are members of Evangelical Church of Bangkok. Greatly blessed by God, Roger desires to be used by Him to assist others in walking with Jesus. Roger's passion is Christian discipleship through understanding God's Word and applying it to everyday living.

Mike B. Wood is married to his wonderful wife of 28 years. He is a Pastoral Counselor in the area of sexual recovery therapy. He is a man in process, passionate about bringing men together to share life together. This is where we study God's Word together and share the challenges we face. This inspires us to accept what God has freely given us: His love, mercy, grace and acceptance. He and his wife have lived in Thailand for 18 years.

RESOURCES

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

| *New Counseling Service*

New Counseling Service provides counseling and therapy for individuals and families in Bangkok. NCS provides services for expatriates as well as for locals.

W: ncsbkk.com

E: newcounselingservice@gmail.com

| *Pathway To Purity*

The book, Pathway to Purity, is meant to transform your way of thinking about purity, taking you through an initial 16 sessions of encouraging, challenging and application of the material. Pathway to Purity will transform the way you think and live, putting you on a lifetime path of purity and wholeness leading to consistent victory.

W: themstproject.com/pathway-to-purity

E: hello@themstproject.com

THANK YOU

| *With Gratitude*

We would like say thank you to the following for their contribution to RMPP.

Financial Donors

Thank you for generously providing funding that allows for RMPP events, seminars, and translation of materials.

Devotional Authors

Thank you for writing devotionals that inspire, encourage and challenge each of us to pursue greater sexual purity, spiritual wholeness and Christlike maturity.

| *Scriptural Oversight Team*

RMPP has a Scriptural Oversight Team consisting of several pastors from local churches that review all devotionals for theological integrity.

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling warmly. They are both looking towards the camera. The Black man on the left is holding an open book. The white man on the right is leaning in slightly. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

CONNECT GROUPS

RMPP connect groups are a safe place for men to pursue sexual purity, spiritual wholeness, and Christlike maturity within an environment of peer support, encouragement, and accountability.

Connect groups are held worldwide on a weekly basis. To inquire about joining a group or to find out more information please email hello@themstproject.com.

If you are interested in starting an RMPP connect group at your church, men's ministry, Bible study, college group, etc., please contact us. We'd love to support you and have the resources to help you.



**JOIN ONE
TODAY!**

MAY 2023